

FRANKFORD ELEVATED, PRATT STREET STATION
5200 and 5201 Frankford Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-430-A

HAER
PA
SI-PHILA,
706A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
FRANKFORD ELEVATED, PRATT STREET STATION

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Location: 5200 and 5201 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

UTM Coordinates: USGS Frankford Quadrangle, PA - NJ, 1:24,000
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.493302.4430025

Date of Construction: 1920 - 1922

Engineer: Department of City Transit, City of Philadelphia

Architect: Department of City Transit, City of Philadelphia

Present Owner: City of Philadelphia

Present Use: Mass Transit Station

Significance: The Pratt Street Station is significant for its association with an early 20th century transit system in Philadelphia that had a significant local impact on the patterns of growth and development in the city. The Pratt Street Station is representative of early 20th century transportation and commercial design.

Project Information: Portions of the Pratt Street Station are to be demolished as part of the Frankford Transportation Center Project being undertaken by Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). This documentation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Railroad Administration and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

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The Frankford Elevated

With the completion of the Market Street Subway-Elevated ("L") a decade earlier, Philadelphia was looking to expand its rapid transit system. After a period of negotiation between the City of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company, who owned and operated the Market Street line, plans were announced for a new elevated that would connect with the Market Street Subway at 2nd Street and continue along Front Street, Kensington Avenue and Frankford Avenue to a Bridge Street terminus. Earlier hopes to expand the line further northeast, along Frankford Avenue, were abandoned for reasons of budget. As agreed, the line would be financed and erected by the City of Philadelphia, and then leased to the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company, who would operate the system. The new "L" was to be designed by the Department of City Transit.

In 1915, the first contract was awarded for the elevated's steel superstructure. Plans were to complete the full system and be operational in 1918. World War I brought an unexpected halt to the work, however, and the line was not placed in service until 1922.

Pratt Street Station

When World War I brought an end to the construction of the "L", the guide way had been constructed as far as Dyre Street, just west of the planned Pratt Street and Bridge Street stations. In 1919, the city started planning for the completion of the line and began condemnation proceedings for the property needed for the Pratt Street Station. A year later, a building permit was issued to the Department of City Transit for the construction of the station. It was placed in service, along with the rest of the line, in 1922.

The Pratt Street Station is located on the intersection of Pratt Street and Frankford Avenue. It consists of a two story station building on the south side of Frankford Avenue, a mezzanine level that runs under, and is attached to, the guide way, and an entrance/exit stair on the north side of Frankford Avenue. The station shares a center platform and butterfly canopy with the Bridge Street Station to the east.

In both material and design, the Pratt Street Station follows the general appearance of other stations on the line. The south station building is a five-sided, irregularly-shaped, two-story brick structure. The fifth side is formed by a splay between the Frankford Avenue and Pratt Street elevations. The building is designed with a basement and one stairway, from the street floor to the first landing, and two stairways from the first landing to the platform. The building generally is opened to the air and can be entered from entrances on Frankford Avenue, Pratt Street and the splay between Frankford Avenue and Pratt Street.

The building is constructed with a granite base course and Fiske Tapestry brick. It is trimmed with ornamental terra cotta band courses, cornices and copings. Decorative terra cotta inserts are set in the concrete door imposts and marble inserts are found in brick panels between the large window openings on the first and second floors.

The interior is finished simply with exposed brick (now painted), concrete imposts with terra cotta brackets at the doorways, plaster ceilings and metal stairs. Alterations to the interior include new security gates and the addition of retail space on the ground story. The mezzanine and west stair generally match the construction of the station platforms with exposed steel structure, paneled steel knee walls and glazed metal windows.

Architecturally, the design for the Pratt Street Station is in keeping with the general flavor of commercial architecture of the period. In its decorative ornament, and simplicity of form, it draws reference to the commercial architecture of the Midwest Prairie School.

Sources of Information/Bibliography:

Books:

Boorse, J. W., Jr., *Philadelphia in Motion*, Bryn Mawr, Bryn Mawr Press, 1976.

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Ephemera:

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_____, *Diagram of Rapid Transit System. January 21, 1924*, Folder 60.1, 1924, Box A-992, Department of City Transit Files, City of Philadelphia Archives.

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Smedley, *Smedley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1862.

Historic Photographs in Safe Archives:

Photograph Collection, File 637, City of Philadelphia Archives.

- 4713-T *Frankford Avenue: placing of first single column and bent no. 520, north of Church Street, July 26, 1917.*
- 4719-T *Frankford Avenue: looking south from bent no. 531, July 30, 1917.*
- 4818-T *Frankford Avenue: structure in place looking north from Church Street, September 11, 1917.*
- 6145-T *Frankford Elevated: last single column and bent no. 615, Dyre Street, May 9, 1919.*
- 6269-T *Frankford Elevated: south from Ruan Street Station, June 14, 1919.*
- 7126-T *Frankford Elevated: bent no. 620, north of Dyre Street, March 14, 1921.*
- 7162-T *Frankford Elevated: bent no. 635, south of Bridge Street, unloading 35 ton girder, May 2, 1921.*
- 29757 *Platform - Bridge Street Station, view north, November 13, 1952.*

Architectural Drawings in Safe Archives

Department of City Transit, *Pratt Street Station*, April 20, 1920, Architectural Drawings, Files of the Department of Public Property, City of Philadelphia.

Department of City Transit, *Alterations and Additions to Frankford Elevated Railways. Pratt Street Station*, 1947, Architectural Drawings, Files of the Department of Public Property, City of Philadelphia.

